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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000270

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MA](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: TIME TO REGROUP AFTER TALKS COLLAPSE

REF: APRIL 11 CARTER-MARQUARDT TELCON AND EMAILS

ANTANANARI 00000270 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: AMBASSADOR NIELS MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.4 D AND E.

¶11. (C) Summary: The collapse of weekend talks facilitated by the UN and AU between the four main Malagasy political "families" is being followed by a pause. Clarification of SADC's current position, especially as regards the possible return to Madagascar of Marc Ravalomanana, is needed before any new effort can move ahead. At the same time, former President Ratsiraka also withdrew his team, with no clarity on how or whether it might return to the table. Qaddhafi seems intent on leading the African effort to resolve this crisis, and clearly is opposed to the UN's involvement; no one here knows the content of his own recent discussions with Ravalomanana in Sirte. A Thursday SADC meeting in Johannesburg may be the next relevant event, where it is hoped a statement clarifying SADC's March 30 call for a "return to constitutional order" will be forthcoming. Efforts are also underway to convince TGV to give up leadership of the transition authority, which will organize elections likely to occur before the end of 2009, in exchange for agreement that he be allowed to run in them. End Summary

¶12. (C) The ambassadors of the US, France, and South Africa met on Saturday afternoon and again on Tuesday morning with AU Envoy Ablasse Ouedraogo and UN Senior Mediator Tiebile Drame for updates on the AU/UN's joint efforts to foster dialogue among the four main Malagasy political "families" -- Ravalomanana's TIM, HAT President TGV's group, Ratsiraka's Arema, and Zafy's CRN. The purpose of this dialogue is to agree on and sign a "charter for the transition" that would settle the institutions and committees needed to bring the country to elections and divide up leadership positions among the four families. By Saturday both TIM and Arema had walked out, under specific instructions from their two leaders. On Saturday the AU/UN asked for France to pressure Ratsiraka to send his team back, and for South Africa and/or SADC to do the same with Ravalomanana, reinforced afterwards with a call from Washington (ref). Ravalomanana called the South African ambassador on Sunday from Mbabane to say that not only had he not been pressured by King Mswati II to rejoin the talks, but in fact -- he claimed -- the King had told him not/not to send the team back at all. Indeed, Ravalomanana claimed to have gotten the same advice last week from Jean Ping in Addis and from Qaddhafi in Sirte, where he spent several days. Furthermore, he claimed that Qaddhafi and he jointly had called Ban Ki-Moon to request the immediate withdrawal of Drame, claiming that "this is a matter for Africa, not the

UN, to settle," and also suggesting that Drame is "biased against Ravalomanana" and his return to Madagascar. (Indeed, Drame has said repeatedly that he does not consider Ravalomanana's return at this time to be a "factor of stability" for Madagascar -- a view which Ouedraogo and every diplomat involved seems to share. This is especially so as no one can envisage his return without accompanying armed security, which seems both unrealistic and inflammatory.)

¶3. (C) For his part, Ouedraogo commented that he had spoken to Adbou Diouf of the Francophonie, who had told him frankly that "Ravalomanana is a big liar" and that Diouf refused to discuss directly with him any more. Apparently both Presidents Wade of Senegal and ATT of Mali are trying to reach Ravalomanana in Swaziland to advise him to drop his bid to return, but neither have been able to get through. The South African ambassador provided three possible phone numbers to pass along to them. No one is sure what, in fact, Mswati or Salamao of SADC, who was also in Mbabane this weekend, might have said to Ravalomanana. Ambassador Marquardt advised that additional clarity on the SADC message remains a necessary prerequisite to any USG call to Ravalomanana.

¶4. (C) As for Ratsiraka, he also remains intransigent in refusing to send his team back. He was called in Neuilly over the weekend by both "an Elysee advisor" and Drame, speaking to the latter for two hours. Ratsiraka refused to do anything that could be construed as "endorsing the coup d'etat," and specifically rejected accepting TGV at the head of the transition authority. Unbelievably, he suggested returning to Ravalomanana's patently unconstitutional March 17 decree handing power to a military directorate; his aim became clearer when he then suggested that he, as the highest

ANTANANARI 00000270 002.2 OF 002

ranking (albeit retired) Malagasy military officer, should take charge. Drame thought he talked him back from this position, but Ratsiraka continued to insist that the military directorate would be preferable to the HAT. Drame also reported a split between Ratsiraka and Arema former Deputy PM Pierrot, also exiled in France but clearing planning his return, who is now demanding a separate place at the negotiating table for a team representing his interests. For both Ratsiraka and Pierrot, the question of an amnesty is critical to reaching any agreement on the way forward, as only an amnesty will allow them fully to re-enter politics after their returns here.

¶5. (C) Therefore, only Albert Zafy's CRN team remains at the table with the TGV team. Zafy, the only former president now in Madagascar, probably sees his presence here as a major advantage, and perhaps, by remaining in the talks, is angling to be put at the head of the transition if and when TGV steps aside. Drame is focused on the need for TGV to step down from that role, as he does not see the UN or the international community accepting any transition process leading to elections that is run by TGV. Drame is suggesting that TGV be convinced to step down from his current role, in tacit exchange for acceptance that he then be allowed to run in the election (which would require a constitutional amendment on age) in which he would have played no organizational role. The French ambassador, who all along has advocated a necessary exclusion of those running elections from running in them (and vice versa), agreed to "test" that idea with TGV and/or his team. He said he has an appointment today with "Foreign Minister" Andriamanjato, and will start there.

¶6. (C) Drame and Ouedraogo closed the Tuesday meeting with a summary. He and the AU still think that getting all four "families" back to the table to agree on a "charter for the transition" is necessary to start any credible peace or transition process. Therefore he wants France to keep working on Ratsiraka, and SADC, with a follow-up call from the US if the conditions are right, to keep working on

Ravalomanana. He likened the situation to Darfur: "we could go ahead with fewer than all parties and perhaps get an agreement, but we will never get peace or move beyond the crisis if we do." He agreed with ambassadors that the UN and AU should take a break of several days to let the dust settle and see what the Malagasy themselves propose, if anything; there was some agreement that the weekend process had been forced and that this approach should cease. Ambassador Marquardt asked the South African ambassador and Drame to seek more clarity (perhaps from Salamao, whom Drame said he would call) on what King Mswati -- and any others in SADC -- were actually telling Ravalomanana, and Ouedraogo to attempt to discern what was the content of Ravalomanana's discussions with Qaddafi in Sirte. In reply, Ouedraogo first laughed, then acknowledged that this is an area of total darkness and could well be affecting Ravalomanana's thinking in unrealistic directions. Ouedraogo also said he will represent the AU at the Thursday SADC meeting in Johannesburg, which should be followed by a joint SADC/AU mission here (in which Ouedraogo will be the sole AU representative). Ouedraogo said he will press SADC to make a statement clarifying its position on what it means by the "return to constitutional order" which it called for on March 30: does it mean Ravalomanana should return (as he insists it does) and that SADC will somehow facilitate this happening (how?), or does it mean early elections (as everyone here hopes it means). Regarding elections, it now appears that TGV and the HAT have gotten the message from the international community that they must take place within six months, by the end of the year at the latest. Indeed, one fear now is that, if these talks cannot be revived, TGV will simply forge ahead unilaterally with an election process that no one will deem credible.

MARQUARDT